DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 121 677 SO 009 055

AUTHOR Blanning, James R.
TITLE CRIS Case Study Materials in Ethical Decision Making.
INSTITUTION Council for Religion in Independent Schools, New Haven, Conn.
PUB DATE 74
NOTE 24p.
AVAILABLE FROM Council for Religion in Independent Schools, 363 St. Ronan Street, New Haven, Connecticut 06511 ($2.00)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS *Case Studies; Class Activities; Decision Making; *Ethical Instruction; *Ethical Values; Instructional Materials; *Moral Issues; Resource Materials; Secondary Education; Socially Deviant Behavior; *Social Studies Units; Values

ABSTRACT

Designed for secondary-level classroom discussion, these materials contain nine, short case studies of ethical dilemmas. The case studies focus mainly on incidents and issues relevant to high school students. Discussion questions for each case study require students to examine the case, discuss the issue, and make an ethical decision about how they would have reacted in the same situation. The topics of the case studies include stealing from a classmate and shoplifting; plagiarism on a term paper; anti-Semitism; honor codes, cheating, and corporation corruption; homosexuality; teacher-student confidentiality and abortion; the right to die; adolescent drug use; and school integration and black student identity. (DE)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED121677

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
James R. Blanning
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

CRIS Case Study Materials

in Ethical Decision Making

Council for Religion in Independent Schools, New Haven, Conn.

SP 009 055

CRIS CASE STUDY MATERIALS IN ETHICAL DECISION MAKING - CASE #1 - STEALING

A coed boarding school deals with all discipline questions through a special committee made up of ten members, five from the faculty and five from the student body. This special committee has sole power for disciplinary action involving student conduct during the school year and while the school by-laws provide for certain offenses that are of such gravity (major crimes, such as arson, felonies, etc.) that require trustee action, the faculty-student disciplinary committee generally handles all other infractions.

In the spring of 1974, two separate acts of stealing by students in the school came before the disciplinary committee for action.

The first case involved a student who entered a classmate's room, broke into his locked desk, and stole an expensive Japanese camera. Later, when the loss was reported, a search of the dormitory was initiated by the senior proctors and within a few days the camera was located. When confronted with the facts, the student readily admitted that he had stolen the camera and acknowledged his guilt.

The second case of stealing involved a boy and a girl who that same week, walked into a local supermarket in town and stole $28.00 worth of canned hams and other assorted items that would fit into the green school bag the boy was carrying. As they proceeded to walk out of the store, they were stopped by the store manager who asked them to show him the contents of the green bag and accused them of stealing from the store. The two protested that they intended to pay for the goods, but the line at the cash register was so long they decided to leave and return later to pay for the merchandise. The store manager did not believe the story, insisted that they leave the green bag and informed the two students that he was going to report the incident to the school headmaster. He did not call the police, allowed the students to leave the store, and immediately called the headmaster.

When they returned to the school, the students admitted to the headmaster that they had in fact intended to steal the food from the store. The case was then referred to the disciplinary committee.

Confronted with these two cases of stealing that occurred almost simultaneously, the committee from the beginning of its deliberations seemed eager to make a sharp distinction between the two cases.

Concerning the first infraction, involving the theft of a camera within the school, the committee had no trouble making up its mind, and it voted unanimously to suspend the student from the school for the remainder of the term.

However, the committee seemed to have more trouble with the second case. There was a long and tedious debate about the details of the theft itself. Perhaps the students really did plan to come back and pay later even though they admitted otherwise to the headmaster. And somehow, stealing from the large, impersonal supermarket chain was an act of much different magnitude than stealing from one's own classmate. The final outcome was that the committee voted 6 to 4 to more lightly penalize the two students involved by taking away their weekend priviledges for the remainder of the term. All five student members plus one faculty member voted for this minimal punishment.

"Copyright (c) 1974 by The Council for Religion in Independent Schools.
Permission to reprint granted on request". 363 St. Ronan St., New Haven, Conn. 06511

CASE #1 - STEALING

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Was the committee correct and fair in making rather sharp distinctions in the gravity of these separate acts of stealing?

2. Is it more serious to steal from a friend or classmate than from a large, impersonal supermarket chain?

3. Can a qualitative distinction be made concerning the health of the school life? That is, the internal stealing weakens the fabric of trust in the school and should be dealt with more severely, while stealing from the local supermarket does not basically affect the life of the school and is not as serious an offense.

4. What about the argument of one of the faculty members that "stealing is stealing" and all the other considerations raised (stealing from a classmate vs. stealing from a large supermarket, etc.) were irrelevant distinctions, completely unjust to the students involved?

5. Is there a difference between "public morality" and "private morality" as raised in this situation?

6. Do our courts in actual fact often make similar distinctions in sentencing individuals for similar criminal acts?

7. What effect (if any) might this case have on the three students involved? The rest of the student body?

8. Is the structuring of the faculty-student disciplinary committee in this case good school policy?

9. How can this situation become a learning experience for the entire student body?

October 1, 1974

CRIS CASE STUDY MATERIALS IN ETHICAL DECISION MAKING - CASE #2 - PLAGIARISM

Median Academy is an old and prestigious day school for boys located in the suburbs of a large west coast city. It prides itself on the rigor of its intellectual life and the host of well-rounded successful graduates of the school. The sons of many prominent west coast business and professional men for years have attended the school.

In the fall of his senior year, Jack Williams, vice president of the class, seemed to have everything going his way. He was a class officer, popular with his peers, captain of the soccer team, and an honor student for the four years he had attended the school. He planned to apply for admission to six fine colleges and was certain that he would be accepted by several of them.

Just before Thanksgiving vacation, when the soccer season was at its height (two matches per week), Jack was trying to write a fifteen page paper that had been assigned in a modern European history course. He wanted to do well on the paper for he knew it would count heavily on his final mark in the course and be reported, along with his other grades, with his college admission applications.

But time was running short; he was feeling the pressure of his soccer schedule, and he could not seem to write anything for his history term paper.

The weekend before the paper was due, Jack was desperate. He decided to visit the local library and see if he could not find some good material on the causes of World War II, the subject he planned to pursue. He located many books in the library on the subject. He found a rather obscure book translated from German that briefly outlined the roots of World War II in Germany and contained a particularly good chapter on the role of the established military in Germany and its support of Hitler. This would be a perfect subject for a term paper and Jack started to write his term essay paraphrasing the words of the author as he went along. Soon, he found the author describing the situation so well that he simply copied the material. When he was finished, he had a seventeen page paper, but eighty percent of it was straight plagiarism. No matter, Jack reasoned. He was sure that no one at Median Academy had ever heard of this book, much less the particular chapter he had copied almost verbatim.

On the following Wednesday, Jack turned in the assigned paper. The history instructor was not fooled by the paper and readily identified the source of the material and automatically failed Jack in the course. He sent a memorandum to the headmaster for disciplinary action and laid the case squarely before him. In the past, students had been suspended or expelled for plagiarism.

Of course, there were mitigating circumstances in Jack's case. He was a class leader and had done honors work for four years. Certainly, he should not be expelled for this one infraction during this critical period in his senior year.

However, there was the matter of the transcript the school would send along with his college applications. The word "failed" in modern European history would have to be explained as required by the colleges where Jack had applied.

"Copyright (c) 1974 by The Council for Religion in Independent Schools.
Permission to reprint granted on request."

The headmaster decided on a course of action that he felt would solve the problem and bring credit both to Jack and the school. In a private conversation, he explained to Jack that he had no intention of expelling him from school, but he would have to explain the failure on the transcripts when they were forwarded to the colleges. He suggested that Jack write a one page explanation of the failure that could be attached to the transcript. He was sure that such an act on Jack's part would be well received by college admissions officers because of his candor and honesty.

Jack agreed and two days later returned to the headmaster a one page statement describing exactly what had happened. He had been under a great deal of pressure with athletics and studies and had simply cheated on the paper. He recognized his mistake and vowed it would never happen again.

The headmaster was delighted and said he felt that Jack's statement, with its simplicity and honesty would be understood by any college admissions office. Jack, however, raised one reservation. He said his father wanted to edit the explanation before it was finally sent out by the school. This puzzled the headmaster, but he said he would wait and see what the father had in mind.

Jack returned several days later with his father's edited explanation. All references to plagiarism or cheating had been eliminated. Instead, the entire tone of the explanation dealt with a deep misunderstanding and dislike between Jack and the history teacher that resulted in the course failure.

The headmaster immediately called the father and said the new explanation was not acceptable. The father responded by saying that he was a very prominent executive in his company, and he would not allow a paper describing his son as a cheater to be sent out from the school. He insisted that his edited version of the incident be sent out with any transcripts.

The headmaster explained that if that were the case, then the school would be obliged to send out a standard explanation of what the failure meant because the integrity of the school was involved.

As a result, the following happened. With Jack's college application went three documents from the school: one, the transcript itself; two, Jack's edited statement of his failure in the course; and third, an accurate statement from the headmaster outlining what had happened in the course.

CASE #2 - PLAGIARISM

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Could the headmaster have refused to send the edited explanation to the colleges where Jack had applied?

2. Might Jack have insisted that his original statement be used in spite of pressure from his father?

3. Did the headmaster err in suggesting that Jack himself write the explanation? Would not a routine explanation from the school have sufficed?

4. Let us assume that Jack enjoys a good relationship with his father, admires him as a person and respects his success in business. What does the case say about the father? What would Jack's feelings about his father's values be after this experience?

5. If the school rules call for suspension or expulsion for plagiarism, why were they not simply applied in this case and all the subsequent unpleasantness avoided?

6. In the last analysis, is plagiarism a serious offense in a school community?

September 24, 1974

CRIS CASE STUDY MATERIALS IN ETHICAL DECISION MAKING - CASE #3 - ANTI-SEMITISM

The General and the Jews

General George S. Brown, currently the chairman of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff is one of the most respected military men in Washington. Everyone agrees that he is bright, able, and well schooled concerning the complex military problems facing the nation. He is a graduate of West Point, was a much decorated pilot in World War II and served later in Korea and Vietnam. Recognized as a "comer" in military and political circles, he rose quickly through the ranks, learned the ways of Washington as a military assistant to Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, and became Air Force Chief of Staff in 1973. In 1974, he was appointed to the highest post in the U. S. Military Establishment, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

As a top Washington official, General Brown receives many invitations to speak to groups all over the country. In October, 1974, he was invited to speak at the Duke University Law School. During the course of his visit, he talked informally about the United States involvement in the Middle East. He remarked that the "Jewish influence" is strong in Congress and went on to say, "it is so strong, you wouldn't believe it.... They (Jews) own the banks in this country. the newspapers, Just look where the Jewish money is".

There was little reaction to General Brown's comments until the Washington Post several weeks later published these remarks that had been taped by a Duke student. The national reaction was immediate and hostile. Jewish groups called his remarks blatantly anti-semitic and called for his immediate dismissal by the President. The General was reprimanded by the Secretary of Defense and received a ten minute personal dressing down by the President who disapproved of the remarks and disavowed any of the comments.

The General was not relieved of his position and said publicly that he regretted his casual remarks, which did not represent his real convictions. Within a few weeks, the furor over the event had subsided.

"Copyright (c) 1974 by The Council for Religion in Independent Schools.
Permission to reprint granted on request". 363 St. Ronan St., New Haven, Conn.06511

CASE #3 - ANTI-SEMITISM

POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Was this incident highly over-dramatized? Did sensitive groups within the Jewish community (and others) over-react to what were essentially innocent remarks?

2. Why do you think General Brown made such inaccurate remarks, such as, "They own, you know, the banks, the newspapers," when the facts are so obviously contrary? (Jewish ownership of newspapers and banks in this country is well under 10%).

3. Do such casual remarks mask the deep-seated anti-semitism that many Jews say is still rampant in our country? General Brown was only saying what we all feel to be the truth about Jews and the way they influence public policy.

4. What is the nature of anti-semitism anyway?

5. Can you think of attitudes and practices of anti-semitism that exist in your own school or community?

6. Is anti-semitism a real problem in our culture or are we protected from serious damage to society by the free press, the laws of the land, and by general public opinion that frowns on anti-semitism?

CRIS CASE STUDY MATERIALS IN ETHICAL DECISION MAKING - CASE #4 - CHEATING

" The Tale of Two Generations"

Saint Celia's is a fine boarding school for girls in the northeast. It has a long history of educating able young women who go on to good colleges and become responsible citizens in our society. One of the most cherished heritages of the school is its Honor Code, which is prominently displayed in all the material sent out by the school and which is known to all the girls. Simply stated, the Honor Code makes it clear that each girl is on her honor not to steal, plagiarize, copy another's work, drink alcoholic beverages or smoke on campus, etc. Each girl is honor bound to abide by the Code herself and report anyone she knows is violating it.

The Honor Code applied to a recent incident that took place when the same test was given to two sections of a sophomore World History class. The two sections follow each other in the morning schedule and in the five minute intermission between sessions, six of the girls in the first section passed on some of the questions to friends in the second section. This act of cheating was reported to the teacher later in the day and the girls involved in the incident from both sections of the class were given failures in the test and restricted to the campus for the next month.

The Berkeley Institute is a well known "think tank" on the west coast. It is located on a lovely bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean and runs seminars for high level executives, college professors, etc., where the important issues of our time are discussed in the leisurely atmosphere of this unique setting. Last spring, the Institute sponsored a seminar on ethical and moral problems in American society and invited business executives, college presidents, judges, government officials, editors, professors and theologians.

One of the main papers was presented by an executive of one of the largest corporations in America and he told the group that one of the persistent problems faced by his office was how to keep the accounting records of the corporation in such a way that they would be accurate and would also obscure the fact that regular operating expenses were payoffs to municipal officials to expedite the installation of new construction in large cities throughout the United States. Casually, this executive cited this practice as just another example of a prevailing functional immorality with which big business had to come to terms.

None of the other participants in the seminar seemed particularly startled by this revelation. One college professor did raise the ethical issues implicit in such illegal acts by this major corporation. Why didn't the company officials go to the local and federal law enforcement agencies, he asked? His colleagues clearly considered such a question naive. They reacted to his persistent questions as if he were an unrealistic child who did not understand the economic and political rules of the great American business game.

"Copyright (c) 1975 by The Council for Religion in Independent Schools. Permission to reprint granted on request". 363 St. Ronan St., New Haven, Conn. 06511

CASE #4 - CHEATING

POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the purpose of a school Honor Code?

2. Was the Honor Code realistically applied in the cheating situation at Saint Celia's School?

3. Would such an Honor Code ever work in business situations such as the one described by the business executive?

4. What is the point of having an Honor Code for students when the rules of business practice appear to be so different in the adult world?

5. How do you react to the apparent inconsistency of the ethical standards that are presented in this case?

6. Are these two situations in fact quite different? One standard of behavior is condoned in one that does not apply to the other?

7. Would you say that the conduct described by the business executive is more realistic and, therefore, more honest than the strict and somewhat hypocritical demands outlined in the school Honor Code?

CRIS CASE STUDY MATERIALS IN ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

CASE #5 - HOMOSEXUALITY

Rockwood is a boarding school in upstate New York, founded 100 years ago to educate "Christian gentlemen." It admitted girls 35 years ago and has been coeducational ever since.

The living situation at Rockwood is typical of such a boarding school. Most of the students are housed in the main large building which is in the center of the campus: the boys live in one wing of this old and attractive building and the girls on the other. Some junior and senior students live in more recently built cottages that surround "Old Main."

Faculty members, both married and unmarried, live in special apartments within the living units themselves. In the case of Old Main, the apartments are at the end of the corridors on each of three floors.

There are also several on-campus houses that are reserved for senior faculty members with children and generally no students live in these units.

In the fall of 1974, a group of younger faculty members asked the headmaster if they might call an informal faculty meeting to deal with what they felt was an intolerable and hypocritical living situation for one of the senior members of the faculty.

The issue they wanted to discuss openly involved a senior master named George Brown. Mr. Brown was the head of the History Department and had taught at Rockwood for the past twelve years. He was one of the most respected members of the faculty, and regarded by faculty, students, and alumni, as one of the finest teachers in the school. George Brown was also a homosexual. This fact was known by almost everyone in the school, including the students, but there never had been any problems rising from his sexual preference.

He had lived in one of the single master's suites in Old Main since he first arrived on campus and no one ever raised a question about his personal life. It was known that some five years ago, he had begun a close relationship with a male teacher in the public high school in Tewkstown, a community about ten miles from Rockwood School. Again, it was well known that the two men often were seen together at the school on weekends, on vacations, and that they generally went on trips together during the summer months. There was no question that their relationship was a homosexual one, but little attention was given to this fact because it seemed like a purely private matter and the school community was not disturbed.

The reason why the younger members of the faculty wanted to call an open faculty meeting was that George Brown had made it known to several of them that he and his friend would like to live openly together, preferably in one of the faculty cottages on campus which would be available the next academic year. This was the issue they wanted to raise before the entire faculty for discussion and decision. Naturally, this kind of decision would have to be made by the headmaster in consultation with the trustees, but it seemed important to have a faculty consensus to relay to the trustees.

"Copyright (c) 1974 by The Council for Religion in Independent Schools. Permission to reprint granted on request." 363 St. Ronan St., New Haven, Conn.06511

The informal faculty meeting was held. Practically everyone was on hand since the subject for discussion had been relayed through the grapevine. George Brown did not attend.

At the meeting, the situation and the request of George Brown to live on campus with his friend was dispassionately presented by one of the convenors of the gathering. But the discussion that followed was far from dispassionate. Some of the real feelings that had long been buried about the homosexuality of George Brown came to the surface. Many faculty argued that to allow two known homosexuals to live together on campus was to endorse this kind of living arrangement and this would be detrimental to the life of the school. "What kind of role model was this for students?" many asked. Others answered that they saw no difference between George Brown living in the dormitory and entertaining his friend than having the two of them live together on campus. The "role model" was not really at issue, some said, especially when George Brown's sexual preference was well known in the community anyhow.

The meeting ended on a very ambiguous note. Obviously, a good deal of hostility was generated, and it was clear that no consensus could be reached concerning the wisdom of having George Brown and his friend live in campus housing.

In the end, the headmaster said he would take the matter under advisement and talk the issue over with George Brown before presenting it to the trustees.

CASE #5

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Should a homosexual be allowed to live in a male dormitory in the first place?

2. If such a single living arrangement was condoned, why should George Brown be precluded from living in an on-campus house with his friend?

3. How would two males living together on campus affect students? Other faculty members?

4. What about this business of "role model?" Does it really make a difference anymore, especially in a living situation where male teenagers are living together?

5. How do you explain the easy acceptance of the role of George Brown currently and the wide esteem in which he is held as a teacher along side the obvious hostility that was raised when the alternate living situation was raised?

6. What would be your advice to the headmaster or trustees in this situation?

CRIS CASE STUDY MATERIALS IN ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

CASE #6 - A SEXUAL SITUATION, A DILEMMA IN CONFIDENTIALITY

Betsy Cook is a first year English teacher at Lakeside Academy, a well-known coeducational boarding school in Connecticut. She graduated from college with honors and then went on to a major state university to acquire a Masters Degree in teaching.

Since she is young, attractive, full of enthusiasm, and very bright, she is having a very good year at Lakeside. The courses she teaches are popular and the students in the school find her to be not only a good teacher, but also a good friend. She lives in a single's apartment in one of the girls' dorms which houses 30 upper class girls.

She finds herself spending a great deal of time in the evenings and weekends talking to the girls, not only about academic questions, but also personal problems. Because she is so near their own age and very open, many girls confide in her matters of quite a confidential nature.

At the beginning of the second semester of the school year, Suzanne Day, a senior who lived in Betsy's dormitory, asked if she might drop in to talk with Betsy about a particularly important problem she (Suzanne) was facing. Naturally, Betsy said she would be glad to talk to her and suggested that Suzanne drop in around 9:00 p.m. that evening for a cup of coffee after the study period was over.

Suzanne showed up promptly at 9:00 p.m. that evening and as soon as she closed the door behind her, she turned to Betsy and said, "Miss Cook, I have something terribly important to tell you, but you must promise that you won't tell any of the other girls, the headmaster, and certainly not my parents." Betsy's first reaction was one of shock that the girl would confront her so quickly with these impossible demands. Haltingly, she answered that it depended on what Suzanne had to tell her, that she couldn't categorically promise anything without first knowing the facts. At that, Suzanne burst into tears and said that Miss Cook was the only one in the school she could trust; she was afraid that if her parents or the school knew of her trouble, she would be expelled and would be in deep trouble with her parents. "Please, Miss Cook, promise you won't tell anyone," (pleaded Suzanne).

Betsy Cook realized how upset Suzanne was and without giving much thought to the consequences, she blurted out, "Okay Suzanne, tell me your problem and I will keep it between you and me." Much relieved, Suzanne then related her story. She had sexual intercourse with her boyfriend back home during the Christmas vacation and now, seven weeks later, was pregnant. She had seen a local doctor the day before who had verified the fact.

After talking the situation over in some detail, it was clear that Suzanne wanted an abortion and wanted Miss Cook to help her. Betsy knew that abortions were done routinely and legally in New York City, and that such an operation could be performed over a weekend at any of the clinics in the city. Suzanne was now asking her to help her set up an appointment and drive her down to the city for the abortion.

"Copyright (c) 1974 by The Council for Religion in Independent Schools. Permission to reprint granted on request." 363 St. Ronan St., New Haven, Conn.06511

CASE #6 - A SEXUAL SITUATION, A DILEMMA IN CONFIDENTIALITY

With considerable misgivings, Betsy agreed to drive Suzanne down to New York City, but Suzanne would have to make the appointment herself at one of the major hospital abortion clinics. She mentioned four prominent hospitals that provided such services and instructed Suzanne to make the appointment.

Suzanne lost no time in making an appointment and when the time came, Betsy Cook drove her to New York City and stayed with her over the weekend, then drove her back to the school late Sunday night. No one at the school knew what was going on and Suzanne was much relieved when she returned to class Monday morning. She felt eternally grateful to Miss Betsy Cook.

CASE #6

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How do you feel about the outcome of this case?

2. Is the confidentiality involved here between student and teacher similar to that of a priest to his parishoner, a lawyer to his client, or a psychiatrist to his patient?

3. Given the complexity of this situation (possible expulsion from school, negative reaction from parents, etc.), did Miss Cook actually come up with the most sensible and humane solution?

4. What about Miss Cook's responsibility to the headmaster and the school?

5. Why hadn't Miss Cook simply referred Suzanne to the school doctor?

6. Should secondary schools make birth control information available to the students and offer to help girls in Suzanne's plight?

7. Is there a legal question here, involving the liability of the school for the acts of one of its teachers?

CRIS CASE STUDY MATERIALS IN ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

CASE #7 - THE RIGHT TO DIE - TWO SITUATIONS

Dr. and Mrs. Griffin

Dr. Griffin was a prominent church leader of great intellectual stature and a prolific writer on important matters facing the Christian Church in the 1940's through the 1960's. He had served as the Dean of a prominent theological seminary and was renowned for his decisive mind and great capacity for leadership in church and theological circles. When he retired at the age of 68, he continued his writing and interest in church and theological concerns, but his health began to fail when he reached his 70's. Also, his wife, who had also been a vital person, developed a serious arthritic condition and was unable to move about without great pain. In 1971, Dr. Griffin suffered a serious stroke, which left his right side completely paralyzed and both he and his wife were confined to a nursing home where constant medical care was available.

As the seriousness of their physical strength continued to worsen, the Griffins decided that there was no hope for their recovery and that they would be a great burden to their children. With the onslaught of increasing illness, they decided on a joint plan to end their lives with mercy and dispatch.

They carefully drafted a letter to their children explaining what they were contemplating, knowing that the family would understand their decision. They wrote, "Nowadays, it is difficult to die. We feel that this way we are taking will be usual and acceptable as the years pass. Of course, the thought of our children and grandchildren makes us sad, but we feel this is the best way and the right way to go. We are both increasingly weak and unwell and who would want to die in a nursing home?"

Several months later, Dr. Griffin and his wife took a heavy overdose of sleeping pills and were found dead in their apartment the next morning by friends.

- - - - - - - - - - - - -

Rev. Bill Mason

Rev. Bill Mason was a vital and alive minister in a suburban church. At 50, he was a perfect specimen with the physique of a long distance runner. One day, while making his parish rounds on his motorcycle, he lost his balance and fell for some unexplained reason. This minor accident bothered him and he consulted his local physician who could find nothing wrong but suggested that he go to a large hospital in nearby New York City for a thorough check-up.

By the time he reached the hospital, he realized something serious was the matter. He began to lose his balance and his vision was failing. The careful check-up at the New York Hospital revealed that he suffered from an incurable disease

"Copyright (c) 1974 by The Council for Religion in Independent Schools. Permission to reprint granted on request." 363 St. Ronan St., New Haven, Conn.06511

which was always fast and lethal. Within two weeks, Rev. Mason was both blind and unable to navigate without the support of his two young sons. The doctors in New York informed him of the seriousness of his disease and said that he would not live for more than a month or two at the most. After hearing the diagnosis, he asked to go home, to spend his remaining weeks with his family and his beloved congregation. This he did, even preaching a final sermon in the church, propped up by his seventeen year old son at the lectern.

The last week of his life, Rev. Mason dictated the following letter to a beloved friend: "What does the Christian do when he stands over the abyss of his own death and the doctors have told him that his disease is ravaging his brain and that his whole personality may be warped, twisted, changed? Then, does the Christian have any right to self-destruction? I find the position of suicide untenable, not because I lack the courage to blow my brains out but rather because of my deep, abiding faith in the Creator who put the brains there in the first place. To mutilate the body would be in a way to mutilate God Himself because He fashioned the body. We are the clay and He is the shaper. But I do not think it is wrong to pray for an early release from the diseased, ravaged carcass."

Rev. Mason entered a final coma shortly after dictating these words and died two weeks later.

- - - - - - - - - - - -

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What, if anything, do these two case histories say about the sanctity of human life?

2. Are there occasions in life when the individual has the right (maybe the obligation) to end his/her own life?

3. Is age a factor in the life/death decision? Would you say that the situation often times facing elderly infirm people is different from that facing a younger person?

4. Why, in your opinion, has the Judeo-Christian position traditionally opposed the right of an individual to end his/her life for any reason?

5. Do you see any reason why our society cannot seem to reach a consensus concerning when life is really not worth living? Think of the great debate over whether or not it is right to prolong life through artificial means.

6. What ethical and moral issues do you think are raised by these two case histories?

CRIS CASE STUDY MATERIALS IN ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

CASE #8 - A DRUG SITUATION

Julie Smith was apprehensive as she registered as a sophomore at Oceanview School, a co-ed boarding school on the west coast. This was her first experience living away from her suburban Los Angeles home and she missed the familiar faces of her old school friends. Julie was a most attractive young person who came from a sophisticated community where things like drinking and smoking pot were taken for granted. In fact, Julie had been part of a small group in her local high school that gathered frequently on weekends to "turn on." She was sure that at Oceanview she would find others who enjoyed the fun of smoking pot.

She was right. Within two weeks, Julie had linked up with a group at Oceanview that shared her interest in marijuana. One Saturday evening, after a heavy smoking session in the woods surrounding the school, Julie wrote the following letter to her sister at home.

"Dear Peggy:

Why do you start having parties <u>after</u> I leave? Well, that's O.K. I've been having my own parties here. Wow! have I ever. One night we were at this place with 14 people. There were 7 joints going around at once. Wow! Another night we had a gram of hash! There were about 5 people. We had to walk across this big tree going across a creek. O God! The thing was going back and forth in my head. I almost fell in. You asked what pipe I have. You know the one I found next door with the big-g-g bowl. I don't know whether I'm going to go here next year or not. I'm beginning to feel like a programmed robot here. Get up, go to breakfast, go to homeroom, go to classes, check-out, dinner, smoke, study hall, bed.

I'm on the smoking committee. This is a committee to see about getting the right to a smoking area on campus. Since I am not a smoker (of cigarettes), they thought it would be a good idea for me to be on it. Well, I'm on it.

George was here. I needed money so he gave me $10, but I am going to a Janis Joplin concert at Chico State in a week. It will cost $5. I was planning on buying a bunch of "stuff" this weekend which will cost more money. I was planning on using the whole $10 for it but I guess I can't. We were planning on getting an ounce of dope and maybe some T.H.C. Oh well, so I need money.

Say hi to George, Stu, Kate, Beth, everyone.

Julie"

Julie was stoned when she wrote that letter and in her stupor, she addressed the envelope to her parents instead of her sister.

"Copyright (c) 1974 by The Council for Religion in Independent Schools. Permission to reprint granted on request." 363 St. Ronan St., New Haven, Conn. 06511

CASE #8 - A DRUG SITUATION

When Julie's parents received the letter, they immediately called the headmaster of Oceanview School, Joe Brown, and said they were forwarding the letter to him and were very concerned about their daughter and the large number of pot smokers at the school. They were unsure what the right action was in this situation and would leave any decision concerning this matter up to him. Joe Brown thanked the parents for their concern and understanding attitude about this affair and promised that he would act immediately.

The rules about the use of marijuana at Oceanview are clear. Solid evidence of pot smoking is grounds for expulsion from the school. Joe Brown was a seasoned headmaster who had dealt with many serious problems during his years at Oceanview and his first move was to call a meeting of the Dean of Students, the School Minister, the Director of Counselling, and the Head of the Upper School. He told them of the telephone call and outlined the contents of Julie's letter which was mistakenly sent to her parents. The group that Joe Brown gathered felt that they could identify at least 11 of the 14 students mentioned in the letter because of past experience and observation of the group that Julie was seen with most of the time.

The School Minister and the Director of Counselling felt that this was a fairly normal occurrence at the beginning of a new school year when there was a good deal of insecurity within the student body, especially among the new students. They advised that it would be a mistake on the headmaster's part to "over-react" by immediately expelling Julie and all the others who positively could be identified as having been involved in pot smoking.

Headmaster Brown listened to their advice. He decided to let things settle down a bit at the school and asked members of the faculty, as well as the individuals who had first advised him, to keep a close watch of Julie's behavior. He also called her parents once a week to let them know what he observed concerning Julie's actions. Without creating a big stir in the school, he called in two upperclass students whom he was sure were involved with marijuana and who were also seen regularly with Julie. He told them that he had strong reason to believe that intensive pot smoking had been going on from the beginning of the school year and that he wanted it stopped.

Essentially, Headmaster Brown was acting on his instinct that the beginning of a school year is difficult for many new students and that behavior during that period is apt to be unrepresentative of how students will act during the rest of the year. According to the rules, he could have expelled Julie immediately. But, he felt such abrupt action would certainly not help Julie and what he termed the "elasticity" of the school and the parents would produce a more positive attitude towards the school on her part. After this decision, Julie wrote this letter to her sister:

"Dear Peggy:

How's life? Guess what! I have decided to almost totally stop smoking. I've stopped smoking hash and TCH most indefinitely, although I never really liked them to begin with. I only had it once anyway. I'm getting sick of smoking dope, too. I don't know exactly why but I am. Maybe it's

just the coming down part or having to face people in that condition. Last week, I was thinking of totally stopping, but I don't think that will work. I have decided just to really slack off. I'm sick of sneaking off and getting my feet wet, etc. It's going to be hard, but I think I can do it. Already, I have turned down lots of the stuff. I decided not to spend the money that George gave me on dope too...

I hope Harlan (the high school at home) is working out O.K. I miss all those people and the marching band. I've stopped taking swimming lessons because I took my test over again and passed. Now, I'm in hockey every day. We are going to play two games. I am going to play in them.

Julie"

- - - - - - - - - - - - -

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. If you were a member of the school discipline committee at Oceanview, would you have handled this situation as Headmaster Brown did by:

   a. by not expelling Julie and the other students proven to be involved in pot smoking?
   b. by closely observing Julie's behavior during the ensuing weeks?
   c. by communicating regularly with Julie's parents?

2. Do you think Headmaster Brown should have simply expelled Julie and the other students involved in this drug incident?

3. Is Julie's case representative? Is it true that because the first few weeks in a school are difficult for many students, certain events like the ones described in this case will change during the course of the school year?

4. Do you agree with the School Minister's observation that schools sometimes tend to "over-react" in such situations? He seems to be challenging the generally held view that expulsion should be automatic in such cases.

5. Headmaster Brown used the word, "elasticity." In your opinion, when should a headmaster or a faculty-student discipline committee be elastic? Cite some examples.

6. What do you think of the change, if any, in Julie's behavior as evidenced in the two letters?

   a. does it reflect greater satisfaction with her school?
   b. does it indicate a change for the long run or the short run or until she faces another crisis?

CRIS CASE STUDY MATERIALS IN ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

CASE #9 - A BLACK TEACHER IN A SUBURBAN COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL

Watson Country Day School is an independent school located in a prosperous suburb of Chicago. It has a fine reputation for the quality of its teaching and the small class sizes. Most of the students at Watson come from upper middle class families who can afford the rather expensive homes that make up the community.

There always have been black students at the school because the town has been open to black families who could afford the homes in that area. Thus, most of the black students come from well educated families whose fathers are successful business or professional men in Chicago. Joe Grady, the headmaster of Watson, has made it his policy to seek out talented and gifted black students from the inner city and bring them to Watson on full scholarships. At the present time, there are twenty of those students.

Thus, no one was very surprised when Headmaster Grady hired George Bradley, a very able Black, to teach American History to juniors and seniors. Everything about George seemed excellent. He had grown up in New York City, had done very well in high school, had graduated with honors in history from a college in Connecticut and had been awarded a Master's degree in history from a university in the Chicago area.

At the beginning of the school year, everything was fine with George Bradley. The students liked him and so did his colleagues on the faculty. The black students thought he was great and from the day he arrived, he was particularly popular with the students who came from the inner city of Chicago. There were a few embarrassing moments at the first meeting of the P.T.A. George was introduced and asked to say a few words. He mentioned something about being glad to be the first black teacher at Watson, and hoped that someday soon, the school would <u>really</u> be integrated. Some of the parents thought that remark was uncalled for, but it was soon forgotten.

However, there were other considerations that began to worry people at Watson Country Day School about George Bradley. He didn't identify much with the other faculty members. He kept his old apartment in Chicago and spent his leisure time with his friends in the predominantly black community in the inner city. At the school itself, he seemed to be more at ease with the black students than with the white students. Every day at lunch, he always had a large group of black students with him. This fact did not bother Headmaster Grady much. He was upset, however, when George came into his office one day and said that the black students had asked him to see if it were possible to have a table reserved for the black students only. Joe Grady would have nothing to do with such an idea because he considered it an attempt to polarize the school community. George offered his observation that the school and the community were already polarized and that the black students were only trying to establish their identity by asking for a special table for black students. In the hostile confrontation, Headmaster Grady made it clear that he would not consider such a request.

"Copyright (c) 1974 by The Council for Religion in Independent Schools
Permission to reprint granted on request." 363 St. Ronan St., New Haven, Ct. 06511

CASE #9 - A BLACK TEACHER IN A SUBURBAN COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL

Another development disturbed the school and parents. George Bradley invited some of the black students at Watson Country Day School to join him on Sunday mornings at The Black Liberation Church in Chicago. The minister was a very eloquent spokesman for the rights of Blacks in American Society. He also condemned the northern cities of America for being more racist than the worst bastions of segregation in the south.

At first, only the black students at Watson from the inner city joined George Bradley at these Sunday morning services but after several months, they were joined by other Blacks who came from the more prosperous families in Watson. Those black parents were upset when their sons and daughters came home from Sunday services with stories about the interesting people they met, the unorthodox worship services, and the "radical" sermons. In Sunday School, they didn't learn about the Bible but were taught karate and judo.

The complaints of the black parents in Watson to Headmaster Grady about what was happening to their sons and daughters were disturbing. Mr. Grady called in George Bradley for a long, heart-to-heart talk. He reviewed the complaints from the black parents and admitted that he had reservations about George's contribution to the life of Watson Country Day School. George responded by saying that he felt that what he did outside school hours was his own personal business and he hoped that he would be judged within the school community solely on his positive attitude toward education and his ability as a history teacher. He felt he had done a good job on both counts.

In April, the contracts of all teachers who had been at Watson for five years or less are automatically reviewed by the department chairman for the coming year. Three teachers' contracts were not recommended for renewal. George Bradley's contract was one of the three. The chairman of the history department wrote Headmaster Grady that he felt that George had not shown the "proper maturity expected in the classroom and that the quality of the work produced by the students in his classes was below par." Headmaster Grady accepted the department chairman's recommendations, and George Bradley's contract was not renewed.

- - - - - - - - - - - - -

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Do you think the request of the black students at Watson Country Day School for a special table at lunch was disruptive to the general life of the school?

2. Do you think there are racial overtones in this case? Would a white history teacher who performed in a similar manner be treated in the same fashion as George Bradley?

3. Do you think that George Bradley lost his job for the reasons given by his department chairman, or because of parent complaints?

4. Do you think that George Bradley handled his extra-curricular duties well? As expected? Appropriately?